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A Course of Sermons
on the
Sixth Chapter of Isaiah

46.

571.



A

COURSE OF SERMONS,

ON THE

SIXTH CHAPTER OF ISAIAH,

Preached during Lent, 1845, at Wicken Church.

BY

RICHARD LEA ALLNUTT, M. A.

MISSIONARY TO INDIA,

AND LATE INCUMBENT OF WICKEN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

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TO MY DEAR BRETHREN, LATELY MY BELOVED FLOCK,
IN THE PARISH OF WICKEN,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

Are Dedicated,

AS A TOKEN OF LOVE AND AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE,

WITH EARNEST DESIRE AND FERVENT PRAYER,

FOR THE STEDFASTNESS OF THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST,

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

RICHARD L. ALLNUTT.

Maidstone, July 20, 1846.

“Therefore, my Brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord my dearly beloved.”

P R E F A C E.

I cannot submit the following Sermons to the notice of the Public, without an apology for doing so.

They were prepared for a Country Congregation, in the Parish of Wicken, ever dear to me, and in whose spiritual welfare many of my friends took a deep and lively interest. And it was with a view to strengthen and perpetuate that interest, that I selected a Course of my Wicken Sermons for publication, as a kind of memorial of my ministrations among the people there. Should my attempt be

successful, and tend in any measure to cement the bond of union between us, and encourage us to more fervent and unceasing intercessions for each other, I shall consider that my time and thoughts during my last few remaining weeks in England were well bestowed in preparing them for the Press.

The following Sermons present themselves with peculiar interest to my own mind. They were preached during a season of unusual inward conflict and ministerial trial, through which I was led to a most happy and joyous Easter Day. And it was then that I devoted myself to the Missionary Work, if the Lord would accept me and open my way.

If ever I was constrained to study my Sermons on my knees, it was at that time: and I have since received many

encouraging tokens of their being owned
and blessed to those who heard them.

I am too conscious of the absence of
originality and power of thought, and of
unnumbered imperfections in style and
diction,—but such as they are I would
present them at my Saviour's feet, trusting
to his grace to accept them for the
good of some of his dear people and his
own glory.

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“And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? and he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”

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SERMON I.

THE PROPHET'S VISION.

ISAIAH VI. 1—5.

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

THE Prophet introduces the subject of this chapter, by mentioning the time at which it took place;—it was the year that King Uzziah died. The kings of the earth and

all their glory pass away ; the name of this king is only introduced here, that the time of his death may fix the date of another event ;—an event indeed, which took place in the retirement of a humble prophet ;—an event, which like many of God's works, caused but little sensation, and was little regarded at the time,—but it was a great and memorable event ; which, though it happened in solitude, is now published abroad wherever the gospel is preached : it was to turn the destinies of many generations, and its influence will be felt to the very end of time.

It commenced with a glorious and mysterious display of Jehovah's majesty.

“ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord,”—I saw also the Lord, another King, the King of kings, the King eternal, immortal, invisible,—who, while all other kings pass away like a flower of the field, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.”

What a moment that must have been to the holy prophet! The very hearing of these things, seems to inspire us with a holy awe and solemn reverence. What must it have been to have witnessed them? To see the Lord upon his lofty throne, while angels and archangels stood around him adoring his majesty; to hear the very thresholds of the temple shaking at the sound. How grand, how dreadful to behold! Doubtless the

prophet remembered how Moses trembled when God appeared to him in the burning bush : he remembered how the voice of Jehovah shook Mount Sinai of old : he could not forget how God smote more than fifty thousand of the men of Bethshemesh in one day, because they looked into the ark that Moses made. What must it then have been to Isaiah to look into the holy place not made with hands, even into heaven itself, the abode of him that inhabiteth eternity.

Let us consider the vision : “ He saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” This glorious Being that Isaiah saw, who in the fifth verse, is called, ‘ the King,’ ‘ Jehovah,’ ‘ the Lord of Hosts,’ was no other than our Lord Jesus ; the eternal Son of God who was in the glory of the Father before the world was.

If it be inquired by what authority I make this assertion ; I answer, by the

authority of his own word. In John xii. 41. we are plainly told that Esaias was then speaking of the Lord Jesus and his heavenly glory. Reading from the thirty-seventh verse, we can come to no other conclusion: “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*”

It was therefore our Emmanuel who then appeared to the prophet upon his throne, high and lifted up, and whose train filled the temple.

The seraphims are the glorious and blessed angels that surrounded him as his bright attendants and willing servants: and they cried one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” Their cry is, Holy, holy, holy; Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Ghost—(Most Holy All-glorious Three; Thrice Holy,) Eternal One. This they cry one to another, echoing and returning it incessantly. Such is their blest employment who stand highest in glory among the servants of God; and those who employ themselves most in praising God on earth attain most nearly to the life of angels.

Each of those glorious beings in the vision “had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.” With their two upper wings they covered the face, with their lowest they covered their feet: and this they did in token of their profound humility and

self-abasement, in the presence of the High and Lofty One before whom they stood. Not only did they conceal their feet, those members which are less honorable, but their faces also:—though, doubtless, they were fairer than those of the children of men, yet they hid them as ashamed to show them before God, even while they flew to execute his commands, and to do his pleasure. “With twain they veiled their face, with twain they covered their feet,” as if abashed before the brightness of Jehovah’s glory, and ashamed of the unprofitableness of their best services.

Here let us pause for a moment’s reflection. Oh, Brethren, if those heavenly courtiers, that have kept their first estate, those glorious beings that never sinned, and stand day and night in the presence of the Most High, if they bow down and veil their faces while they worship and adore him, what should our worship be?

What should be our feelings when we approach him ?

We are met together to worship God in his sanctuary ; and all our service and all our hearts are before his eye : as naked and open in his sight as the faces of the bright archangels that surround his throne.

My Brethren, what thoughts does this solemn truth awaken in our minds ? Has God indeed seen and marked our every action, our every look, our every thought, this afternoon ? Was that vain trifling imagination, (that wanton look, that foolish wish,) that profaned his holy sanctuary, observed by him and noted down in his eternal book ? Doubtless it was—there it is,—fixed and unalterable, till the hand that wrote it shall blot it out.

It is, indeed, a mystery of love and grace in the Lord of Heaven, who is so glorified and reverenced by the angels, that he will condescend to accept or to notice our

worship at all;—seeing that we never approach him without dishonouring him by our sins, and can only present to him that which is polluted and defiled.

But surely, Brethren, it becomes us to approach him with the deepest humility and self-abasement—with a contrite heart and lowly spirit to bow before his footstool. I often think and wonder what our worship must appear in the eyes of the blessed angels.—How they must stand astonished at man's irreverence; at the carelessness, (might I not add) the presumption with which we too often engage in our sacred duties.

Oh that our minds might be led to a due consideration of this subject, and our hearts suitably impressed by it.—When we approach our God in any act of worship, and especially when we enter this sacred place, let us devoutly call off our minds from every other object, and consider what

we are about to engage in;—we might say, ‘my soul, I am now about to engage in the greatest work that can occupy the mind of men or angels, I am about to enter into the presence chamber of the most holy God, and to speak to him who soon will be my judge.’ Let us look at him as sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up, and consider his glory there, while myriads of angels bow down before him. This would greatly tend to compose our minds; and if we took due care in such a preparation before we entered upon our sacred duties, perhaps we should not so often have to complain of distracted minds and languid frames in the performance of them. If any one will go hot from the world and worldly company into the sanctuary, he cannot expect that the thoughts of the world will take leave of him as soon as he enters within her sacred gates. David said, “I will wash mine hands

in innocency, and so will I compass thine altar."

But now let us observe what was the impression made upon the mind of the prophet by this display of the divine majesty and glory:—he said, ‘woe is me, for I am undone!’—we should have rather exclaimed, ‘blessed and highly favoured man, whose eyes have seen the King exalted on his throne, and whose ears have heard the music of heaven!’—We should expect to hear him say, ‘happy am I, never to be sad again!’—but no, he cried, ‘woe, woe is me, for I am undone.’ That glorious display of things unseen threw him into the deepest humiliation, and almost into despair: he was overwhelmed at the sight, nothing but death and destruction seemed before him: the view that he had of Jehovah’s purity and Jehovah’s glory, gave him such a conception of his own vileness, that fear came upon him, and horror

overwhelmed him: he cried, ‘woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.’

And such has always been the effect of a special manifestation of God to his people; it has always humbled them and laid them low before him. And so it is with them now. The more we become acquainted with God and his glorious perfections, the more humble we shall be, and the less we shall be in our own sight.

What a striking instance we have in Job xlvi. 5. the patriarch says, “I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” His previous knowledge of God had led him to seek his favour, and yield him homage; but a full discovery of his divine glory, laid him in the dust and made him loathsome in his own sight.

“Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Look again at St. Paul, that prince of saints, the man that was caught up into the third heavens, and saw things which it was not lawful for him to utter: what notions did he entertain of his own goodness? he exclaims, like Isaiah, “O wretched man that I am!” and if he speaks of sinners, he must needs add, “of whom I am chief.”

The effects of the vision then upon the prophet were by no means peculiar, but such as it would naturally produce: his enlightened contemplation of the pure and holy God caused him to exclaim, ‘woe is me.’ The cry of the angels, ‘Holy, holy, holy,’ sounding in his ears, laid him in the dust and constrained him to cry out, “I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” How shall I ever join that holy company in their pure worship? “I

am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." He felt that he dwelt among a wicked and ungodly people, which is always a grief and burden to God's children. But we observe, that he bewailed *his own* uncleanness *first*; and so every awakened child of God begins with his own sin; it is that to which he is most alive, which grieves him most, which lies as the heaviest burden upon his soul. And the more we know of God, the more conscious we shall be of our own vileness and sinfulness; if we are proud and self-righteous, it is because we are ignorant of God. A very little knowledge, a little hearing of him with the ear, would lead us to acknowledge that we are sinners, that we have transgressed his law; almost every one would make this confession. But if we have been brought to see him by faith as he is revealed in his word, to feel how

infinitely pure and holy he is ; how he hates and abhors the smallest sin ; how he marks and records it in the book of his remembrance : then we feel constrained to say, ‘ how vile must I be in his sight ; ’ ‘ woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.’

My Brethren, this conviction of the heart, this inward consciousness of sin and guiltiness before God, is the first change which takes place in the conversion of a sinner : it is produced by a clearer knowledge and more just view of a holy God. Formerly he used to think (as too many do) that a little religion was quite enough, and was satisfied because he was as good as his neighbours : but now his eyes are opened, now he has seen what God is, he feels that nothing short of a perfect obedience can ever satisfy him ; that without a spotless holiness he can never see him : he is convinced that he is a

sinner indeed, that there is no goodness, no health in him; ‘woe is me, for I am undone,’ is the very language of his soul.

This is a discovery indeed, which is never made but by the powerful teaching of God’s Spirit; but till it is made, the soul is in the utmost danger, without knowing it; slumbering, unconscious, on the brink of the abyss of endless woe.

In conclusion, the subject suggests:—

1. **Comfort for Believers.**

We are often very incompetent judges of the state of our own hearts, and the growth of grace within us. Sometimes we think that all is prosperous, that we are in a flourishing state, and that our mountain stands strong, when indeed we are in the greatest danger; therefore the apostle admonishes us, “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

And so on the other hand, often when we are most cast down about ourselves;

when we are mourning over the hardness of our hearts, and think we are making no progress; when we pray and strive and fight, and seem baffled and almost disheartened in every conflict: then, Brethren, if we only keep fighting on, victory is near at hand. Those views of our own sinfulness, that self-abhorrence, that loathing of ourselves, that smiting upon our breasts and mourning over the hardness of our hearts and the uncleanness that we find within, must not discourage us; oh, far from it, they afford the clearest proof that the Holy Spirit is at work within us; they show that we are advancing in the knowledge of God, and drawing nearer to him. That soul is ripening for glory, that is growing in humility. How beautifully this truth is illustrated in the corn-fields: when first the wheat-ear makes its appearance, it comes up erect and straight; but, as it comes to maturity and ripens for the

garner, it gradually droops its head and bends towards the ground. So it is with the believer, at the beginning of his course he may be compared to the wheat-ear when young and erect; but as he advances in spirituality and acquaintance with God, as we watch him becoming matured and ripening for heaven, we see him like the ripening corn, bending his head, growing in humility and self-abasement, and becoming less and less in his own esteem.

Hence we may learn to discover who are the persons most advanced in piety and spiritual understanding. Many tell us of their inward joys and seasons of communion with heaven; they love to talk of their experience, and their hidden life with God; what manifestations of his glory they have been favoured with; what rejoicing they have felt. We ask, has their view of God made them eminently humble? has it led them to think little of themselves? or

are they lifted up by it? are they proud and self-important, seeking for the notice and applause of others? Then we may be quite sure that they are only deceiving themselves. They have been pleasing themselves with the day-dreams of their own imaginations; their joys are visionary, deceitful, and dangerous.

2. We have here also thoughts for self-examination.

Surely we may say if a sight of God as He really is, filled the holy prophet with such astonishment and terror, as to cry 'woe to himself as outcast and undone; ' if he was so humbled by seeing God, let me inquire whether I have ever seen him as he is revealed in his word, if I have any just conception of the holiness of his character and perfect harmony of his attributes. Oh, Brethren, would we form a correct estimate of our knowledge of God, we have only to inquire whether we feel

abased before him? do we look upon ourselves as utterly deformed and vile in his sight, unworthy to make mention of his name? Oh, if we rightly knew God and our condition before him, we could no more dare approach him, excepting through the mediation of Christ, than we could rush into the midst of devouring flames.

Let us take this subject home with us; let us carry it to our closets and to God upon our bended knees;—let us calmly reflect upon the prophet's exclamation, when he saw the King the Lord of Hosts: bearing in mind that he had known much of God before; it was only a new revelation, a fuller display, of the divine glory that was then brought before the eye of his soul:—yet when he saw it, he cried out “woe is me, for I am undone.” Is not this enough to awaken our serious and earnest attention? *in all of us*, without exception? O, truly it is: we *are* unclean,

we *are* of unclean lips; if we do not know it, if we do not feel it, it is because we do not know God; it is because we are sinfully, wilfully, dangerously ignorant of him.

Brethren, I leave this subject with you, and would most earnestly and affectionately beseech you to lay it to heart and consider it solemnly and prayerfully; the eternal welfare of your precious souls hangs upon it. Behold I set before you life and death, therefore choose life. And oh, remember, that whether we become acquainted with God *now* or not, we must all one day see him: and if the sight made Isaiah cry, 'woe is me;' if the beloved apostle, who had so lately leaned upon his breast at supper, fell down at his feet as dead, when he saw him in his glory; how will the unpardoned sinner stand before him, when in the majesty of his glory he will summon the world to his bar? what then will

be their anguish and dismay who now deny his name and resist his dominion.

Oh, if we would escape the misery of that awful moment, let us be wise in time: let us, with all diligence, *acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace with him now.* Oh, my fellow sinner, haste, haste to this great work, pray that God may open your eyes; entreat him to reveal himself to you: seek for a right knowledge of God; and cease not to pray till the words of Job speak the language of your soul, “now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

The subject of our next discourse, provides a cordial for the convinced and contrite sinner; but lest there should be one here to day brought to a sense of his sinful and lost condition (and oh I would to God there were many such), I will tell you of the cordial, I will point you to the remedy, “Behold the

Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

SERMON II.

THE ALTAR COAL.

ISAIAH VI. 6—7.

“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

IT was a peculiar mercy, and must have been a great encouragement to the prophet, when he was permitted to look into the courts of heaven and hear the angels' song, that our world was the subject of their praise, “the whole earth is full of thy glory.” It would have been no matter of surprise to us, if they had been extolling

the glories of the heavenly world : that the courts of heaven, where nothing that defileth can enter, where all that is pure, all that is holy, all that is lovely, exists and infinitely abounds ; that they are full of God's glory we know, and they might afford an endless theme for seraphic praise. Or, if we may conceive that among the myriads of worlds that God has created, some are still free from the pollution of sin and its dreadful effects ; surely such pure and holy regions must afford a fitter subject for the adoration of angels, than our poor fallen world ; which is so ruined by sin and groaning under its curse, as St. Paul expresses it, Romans viii. 22. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

But so it was,—in mercy, no doubt, to the prophet, and in *much mercy to us*,—that when he saw the heavenly vision, the seraphims' cry was, “Holy, holy, holy,

is the Lord of Hosts, the *whole earth* is full of thy glory."

They saw the earth to be **FULL** of God's glory. All thy works praise thee, O Lord. The beasts of the earth and creeping things praise him: the fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy winds fulfil his word. All these glorify him, all obey their Maker's will, and all keep his laws:—**ALL**, but the highest, the noblest, the most favoured of all creation,—oh, the humbling thought!—man alone rebels. The earth had indeed appeared full of God's glory, if man had never sinned. Look at Adam in paradise,—in that happy garden without a fear, without a care, without a want, without a sorrow, but above all, without a thought of sin or rebellion against his Maker's will:—there he lived, and might have lived for ever, rejoicing in the beautiful works of his Creator; welcoming his gracious visits, when he came and walked

in the garden in the cool of the day;—with peace and joy he beheld and communed with his God. Then there was not a thorn or a thistle to offend his eye; not a weed or any thing that defileth to be found all over that beautiful world which he had made, which he had so lately looked upon and behold it was very good, and he rejoiced in the work of his hands.

But when sin entered,—how great, how melancholy the change! The very ground was cursed, and our father driven out of Eden. The man who had lived so near to God and delighted in his presence, now dreaded his appearing—he tried to hide himself behind the trees of the garden; and when he could not hide *himself*, he endeavoured to conceal his shame. Oh the evil of sin! see how it ruins and debases the whole man. Adam, who had known God only as his friend, as soon as he had sinned,

fled from him as his enemy. At once he seemed to forget his Almighty power and wisdom, or else he would not have attempted to hide himself from his all-seeing eye, and then to deceive him; so *soon* was his heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

With such a picture of fallen man; knowing as we do, that this ruined nature is entailed upon all his posterity: as we look around and see the effects of the curse written upon every thing whichever way we turn our eyes;—is it not strange and wonderful that the angels should cry, “the whole earth is full of thy glory?”

But we answer, their language was prophetic; they were disclosing to Isaiah the mystery of redeeming love; a scheme which would reflect higher glory upon Jehovah’s name, than ever could have come from man’s innocence and obedience:

it was a scheme contrived by infinite wisdom, and accomplished by matchless love; by which sinful and ruined man is raised far above the blessed estate of Adam in Paradise, and made the heir of eternal glory. It was as they contemplated these things, which, as Peter tells us, "they desire to look into," that they saw the earth to be full of God's glory.

The eternal Son of God, by coming into our world, shed such a bright and heavenly lustre upon it, that he filled it with his glory. Every one of God's elect people, in whose heart the image of Christ is reflected, is a bright and shining light which serves to fill the earth with his glory. But the angels' song was foretelling days yet to come, when the gospel shall have spread to the ends of the earth and the Redeemer's kingdom shall be universally established—when the earth

shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the face of the sea, and his rest shall be glorious. To these days we must look forward for the full accomplishment of the prophetic language of the angels, when they sang in Jehovah's praise, "the whole earth is full of thy glory."

But in every conversion of a soul and the adoption of a child of wrath into the holy family of God, there is a marvellous display of Jehovah's glory; and that work of grace by which this change is effected, is described in our text. May the Holy Spirit now glorify Christ by receiving of his and showing it to us, that we may profitably contemplate his finished work, and learn our interest in it.

We have here to consider:—

- I. The prophet's preparation for the work to which he was called.
- II. The perfection of it.

I. We have here described, the means by which the prophet was prepared for the work to which God called him.

“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.”

God had been humbling the prophet and laying him low, by giving him a view of his own glory and discovering to him his holiness: which led him to exclaim, “woe is me; for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” And now God shows him the remedy—no sooner does he cry out, than mercy comes,—an angel flew with a coal from the altar and purged away his evil disease.

And so God always deals with repenting sinners; when he graciously convinces them of sin, and makes them feel their vileness, he always goes on to cleanse and comfort and sanctify them. We may take great comfort and derive much hope from a deep conviction of sin, if we find that it leads us to Christ.

Now see how the prophet was purged;—“an angel *flew* with a live coal from off the altar:”—we observe, *that he flew*; he came at his Lord’s command and hastened to do his will:—no time must be lost, for the bowels of Almighty God are yearning over one of his afflicted children;—he had torn, and now he would heal;—he had broken, and now he longed to bind him up. Not one moment shall be delayed when God sees it to *be the time* to heal and comfort a poor sinner; and here we find *that time* to be, when he lies humbled and distressed at the foot of the cross.

“The angel brought in his hand a *live coal*, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar, and with that he touched the prophet’s lips.” This represents the work of the Holy Spirit, cleansing and healing the penitent sinner by applying the blood and grace of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is that purifying fire—a touch whereof cleanses the heart, the lips, and all; and at the same time it kindles those affections in the soul, which cannot die out, which *not many*—which no waters can quench again. What a striking instance we have of this in the events of the great day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles in cloven tongues like fire and rested upon them. They were not only purified from all guilt, but they were filled with a holy fire, which, as we have said, many waters could not quench; all the floods of opposition, persecution, difficulties

and trials, yea, the deep waters of death itself could not extinguish it.

But let us examine the seraph's action more particularly.—We are informed, that the live coal was taken from off *the altar*. This intimates that the living fire of the Holy Ghost comes from Christ alone; who is at once our altar, our sacrifice, and our great High Priest. We are not told whether the angel took the coal from the altar of burnt offering, or the altar of incense, both of which were in the temple of the Jews:—but it is not important—for one of these, the altar of burnt offering, pointed to the atonement of Christ; and the other, the altar of incense, represented the intercession of Christ. The fires upon these altars were burning continually and never went out, having been kindled first with fire that came down from heaven. And that the live coal was taken from one of these altars beautifully reminds us

that no healing virtue, no purifying grace, can come to us but through Christ's death and Christ's intercession.

John the Baptist declared concerning his Lord and Master, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And he himself alluded to that fiery baptism, Luke xii. 49. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" And in Mark x. 39. he said to the two sons of Zebedee, "ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized."

Again we observe, that the angel took the live coal and put it upon the prophet's mouth and touched his lips, and thereby his iniquity was taken away and his sin was purged. This represents the mission of the Comforter to apply the merits and grace of Christ to the conscience of distressed and broken hearted sinners. The

work of Christ in behalf of sinners is complete and perfect; but it only *becomes effectual to their salvation*, when it is applied by the gracious power of the Holy Ghost. Here we are reminded of those blessed words of St. Paul, “*by grace ye are saved.*” It is a salvation by grace and by grace alone, that is offered to us in the gospel. In the preceding verse, which was our subject last week, we were shown how a sinner is convinced of sin—even by the divine power of the Holy Spirit affecting the heart with a sense of God’s purity and holiness. Now we see that it is by that same Spirit *alone*, that the remedy can avail to heal and comfort those who are convinced and distressed by a sense of sin. The remedy is indeed prepared, and it is all-prevailing wherever it is applied; and it is freely offered to all: but those only who are convinced of sin by the distinguishing grace of God; who

would appropriate to themselves Isaiah's language, and say, "woe is me, for I am undone;" lost and ruined and undone for ever if left to remain in my present condition; only such as these desire such a remedy as the gospel offers to guilty souls. But alas, these would lie down in despair, and never take the comfort of Christ's salvation, unless he sends his Spirit upon them, as he sent the angel to apply the live coal to Isaiah's lips.—Till then they cannot understand his love and willingness to save—they are afraid to trust him;—they are not able to discover how exactly his salvation is what they want. The Holy Spirit must convince them of this; he must assure them of the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse them, the sufficiency of his grace to save them; nay, he must lead them and strengthen them to apply to the remedy, or else they would all perish;

not a soul would be saved, and Christ's blood would have been shed in vain.

But it is the office of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to distressed souls, and to apply his grace for their comfort and relief: and he faithfully fulfils his work. Behold that blessed company of the redeemed, that no man can number, around the throne of God—they cease not to give glory to the Lamb, who washed them from their sins in his own blood. Ask them whence they received the knowledge of Christ? how he was made precious in their view? how they were brought to trust in him? we know what they would answer, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Not one of them attained to a saving knowledge of Christ, but by his gracious teaching.

When he visits a soul distressed and bowed down under a sense of guilt, he

brings a revelation of Jesus Christ, which is sufficient to dispel every cloud, to silence every doubt, to banish every fear. By taking up his abode in the heart he directs the eye of the soul to the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and communicates a new life and power effectually to embrace it.—He enables the sinner to apprehend and believe the doctrine of the cross, and to rest upon it as the rock of his salvation. And so he fulfils his office, as the Comforter.—He gives peace to the conscience,—warmth to the affections,—a perfect love which casts out fear:—and the spirit of bondage is exchanged for the spirit of adoption, crying within him, **Abba Father.**

But there are some points yet to be noticed in his wonderful account of the prophet's preparation for this work; and which lead us to consider:

II. The perfection of it.

1. It was sudden and complete.—It was the work of a moment to exchange Isaiah's lot from the extremity of woe to the summit of bliss. The angel flew with the altar coal and touched his lips, and he that had been of all men the most miserable, the most conscience-stricken and disconsolate, became the happiest man in all the world, and the acknowledged favorite of heaven. That mysterious touch dissipated all his fears and loaded him with blessings. Blessed he was, for unto him the Lord imputed not iniquity:—blessed, for his transgression was forgiven, his sin was covered. It was a complete and universal remedy; it admitted neither of exception nor defect; it found him an unclean, fearful, and unhappy sinner; it left him a justified, peaceful, and beloved child of God.

When God begins a work, he will make a perfect work: when he undertakes to

purge a soul from sin, he frees it from every stain: "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Who shall charge that soul with guilt whom God has pardoned? His pardon is a free pardon, and it is full, it is infinite as his own nature. And so the apostle Paul challenges all accusers to lay any thing to the charge of God's elect,—the people whom he has chosen to be partakers of his grace and forgiving love. Who shall lay any thing to their charge? It is enough that God has justified them; he has acquitted them at the tribunal of his justice; he has cancelled their debts; he has blotted out their sins; and who can condemn them? Christ is their surety; he stands in their stead to answer for them to all their accusers: being made one with Christ, they stand before God complete in righteousness:—as Christ is in the sight

of God, so are they, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.

2. In the grace exhibited to the prophet we admire,—its adaptation to his feelings and circumstances.

The evil which he deplored was the uncleanness of his lips; and to that the angel's visit of mercy was directed: he flew with the altar coal and laid it upon his mouth and said, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.”

It is remarkable that his penitential confession should have been confined to the pollution of the lips:—he passes by the uncleanness of his heart and hands, to bewail this; “I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” But do we not find a corresponding pre-eminence given to *offending in word* by our Lord, when he said, Matthew xii. 37. “By thy words

thou shalt be justified, and by thy *words* thou shalt be condemned?" And again, Matthew xii. 36. "Every idle *word* that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." To which we add the testimony of St. James, James iii. 2. "If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man." How solemnly this admonishes us, Brethren, to set a special guard upon our lips, and to watch against that which might defile and pollute them. A faithful scrutiny of our every-day conversation, would constrain us to cry out, "woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." But behold the remedy! The heavenly messenger bringing the purifying fire to take away Isaiah's pollution, directs our thoughts to the same unfailing source of cleansing.

And we observe how exactly the blessing was suited to his circumstances; it had a direct reference to his mission: he was

called to speak the words of the Lord, to deliver his message; and therefore the all-precious, omnipotent grace was to be communicated to his mouth, to touch his lips.

When God calls his servants to any special service, he will by his grace prepare them for it. And this preparation consists first and chiefly, in cleansing from guilt and sin. Christian purity is essential to christian activity. The blood of Christ must purge the conscience from dead works, in order that we may serve the living God.

3. And lastly, we may notice that the perfection of the Lord's interposition in behalf of his afflicted servant, consisted partly in his giving him a testimony of his favor and love. He not only cleansed him, but he assured him that he was made clean.—“Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.”

We must always be careful to observe the distinction between assurance and a saving faith. Mistakes upon this point lead some to presumption and others to despondency.

Assurance is the happy consciousness that we possess a saving faith,—a realizing sense of our blissful portion as believers. True faith may exist without assurance ; but a well-grounded assurance there cannot be without a living and productive faith. But at the same time, assurance is a part of the covenant portion of every believer, and he ought never to rest satisfied without the full enjoyment of it. It is a joy indeed with which the stranger cannot intermeddle. It is altogether indescribable as it is incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it ; like the peace which it produces, it passes all understanding.

Yes, Brethren, it is the privilege of the saved soul to know that he is saved,—like

the poor woman in the gospel, to feel in himself that he is made whole of his plague. The eye of faith can discern the smiles of a reconciled God. The Spirit of adoption recognizes the Father's voice,—the still small voice,—‘Son,’ ‘Daughter,’ ‘Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;’ ‘Thine iniquity is taken away, thy sin is purged.’

Brethren, look upward; behold the Lord Jesus upon his throne high and lifted up—he is your Saviour; he waits to be gracious. Look to him; believe in him.—And being justified by faith, you will have peace with God; he will give you grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from you.

SERMON III.

THE PROPHET'S MISSION.

ISAIAH VI. 8—12.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me. And he said, go, and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? and he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”

THE influence of the Spirit of God is two-fold: it purifies and it quickens.

In our last discourse, our attention was directed to the purifying influences of the Spirit. The prophet was lying before God, amazed at the glorious appearance of his majesty and holiness; and confounded and almost in despair through a sense of his own vileness: and he cried out, “woe is me, for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” “Then flew one of the seraphims, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.” We showed that the live coal represents the Holy Spirit applying the work of Christ for the salvation of a soul; which he does by enabling the convinced and humbled sinner to exercise

faith in Christ, and to wash in his blood, as in a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness.

This is then one work of the Spirit of God, to purge and purify the soul from sin; and the other is, to quicken the soul to serve and please God. The work of purifying always comes first; we must have our conscience purged from dead works by the blood of Christ, before we can serve the living God. But wherever he begins his work, he carries it on: where he accomplishes his gracious design to purge a guilty soul from sin, he never fails to carry on his work to make that soul fruitful in good works and a holy conversation.

We have a most striking instance of this truth in the conversion of St. Paul:—where we see how mighty is the power of God, and how wonderful the effects, when he begins to work.

Look at Saul going down to Damascus, full of pride, and zeal, and prejudice; exceedingly mad against the cause of Jesus, and pledged and sworn to bind and imprison all who loved him. As he goes along, he pours out against him all the bitter and blasphemous words that the pride and enmity of his heart could suggest; railing against the despised and crucified Jesus, and breathing out threatening and slaughter against his disciples; while he carried in his hand a warrant against them from the chief priests. Thirsting for their blood, he drew near to Damascus, when suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, he fell to the ground: the heavens opened, and a bright light shone round about him: he saw the despised and crucified one, *now in all his glory*; and at the sight he fell to the earth; and he heard the voice of Jesus, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” That was

enough; one view of Jesus, one sight of his glory laid the proud persecutor low in the dust: beholding his wounds melted his hardened heart: he looked upon him whom he had pierced, and mourned; and he cried out, “who art thou, Lord?” O wondrous change! Now he calls him *Lord*; he owns him as *his* Lord: though a few moments before, he thought him nothing but a deceiver, a malefactor,—now he acknowledges him to be the Lord of life and glory;—and he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Mark this, my Brethren; no sooner did he repent and believe, than he must be employed for God. The same Spirit that convinced him of sin and gave him comfort in Christ, by a glorious and blessed necessity went on to move him to “live no longer to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again:”—he cried, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to

do?" and from that moment he gave up himself to him. Having received a commission from above, he began at once to preach that worthy name which he had so long despised; and laboured night and day, through evil report and through good report, through perils and sufferings, through bonds and imprisonment, as we all know, till at length he laid his head upon the block in his dear Master's cause.

This change in Saul of Tarsus is a most striking instance of the two-fold influence of the Holy Spirit:—which is in constant operation in the Church; and without which there cannot be a single conversion to God:—it is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, and transforming proud opposing sinners into the meek and gentle followers of the Lamb.

Let us now endeavour to trace this operation of the Spirit in the prophet's

heart. As we have observed, his troubled and afflicted conscience was eased by the touch of the altar coal; but the effect of that touch was not confined to this; it not only gave him ease and relief, but it kindled a holy fire within him.—A voice was heard in heaven, “whom shall I send? and who will go for us?” Then said the prophet, “*here am I, send me.*”

The coal from God’s altar had touched him, the spirit of God had moved upon his soul, and he must be employed in his service. He only waited for a call, and he was ready, “*here am I, send me!*” He had not to wait long; nor will any whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and desire to be devoted to him: Christ has a great work to do; the harvest is plenteous, and his labourers few, every hand therefore should be engaged, and we should pray

the Lord of the Harvest to send more labourers into his harvest.

We have now to consider:

I. The Prophet's Mission.

II. The Prophet's Message.

And may the Spirit of the living God be among us and rest upon us. May he guide and teach me what I ought to speak; and may he apply the word with power to all our hearts.

Let us consider:

I. The Prophet's Mission.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I, send me. *And he said, go.*”

We may notice that we have here an intimation of the three persons in the sacred Trinity. The Lord Jehovah said, “who will go for *us?*” We find the like deliberation of the eternal mind, Genesis i. 26. “And God said, let us make

man in *our* image, after *our* likeness."—And so here; there is a council held in heaven by the eternal three; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, hold a consultation, who shall be the messenger to carry forth their message to man?—"Who will go for us?" Now this was not that there was any doubt who should go:—not that Jehovah wanted messengers who would be willing to be sent.—Was there not around the throne a multitude of angels, a company that no man could number, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands? or, as Daniel describes them, c. vii. 10. "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."—Were not these all ready to do their Maker's will? Was it not their employment and supreme delight to do his commandments and fulfil his pleasure? What need then for this enquiry?

It is true the *angels* were ready, but a **MAN** was *sought*. In mercy to men, God will teach them his will by men like themselves, by those who are themselves interested in the message;—who, while they are workers together with God, are sinners and sufferers together with us.

If a pure and shining angel came among us, should we not be troubled at his presence, and be unfitted to profit by his words? how could he preach to sinful man? could he make allowance for our frailties and pity our infirmities, so as to minister suitable consolation? his voice must needs be glorious and his language heavenly; but would it be likely to meet our case in our present state, while we groan being burdened with a fleshly and corrupt nature, and find our hearts cleave to the dust?

Little indeed could an angel sympathize with the difficulty our earth-bound spirits

experience to rise above the vanities of the world to participate in the joys of heaven.—His undefiled nature, his uninterrupted bliss, his exemption from sorrow, and pain, and temptation, would unfit him for such a ministration as we want—he could not speak the word in season to the inhabitants of this vale of tears, participants in the ruin of the fall.

How this reflection magnifies the grace of the Lord Jesus, who, though he came from above and was above all, yet took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.—Though he was the brightness of Jehovah's glory and the express image of his person, yet he was made in all things like unto his brethren, that he might be to them a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; while, at the same time, it should awaken our liveliest gratitude for his

tender mercy and infinite wisdom in appointing a ministry of men to make known to us his will.

But we may remark further, that if an angel proclaimed the gospel with his pure and heavenly voice, we should be ready to ascribe at least some part of the work of conversion to him; but as it is, as God has appointed a ministry of man, as he has chosen the foolish and weak and despised in this world, he secures to himself *all the glory*, to whom alone it is due,—he says, “I am Jehovah, I will not give my glory unto another.” And so says the apostle, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels”—and not heavenly vessels, not at the hands of angels;—but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, in frail, earthly, human vessels; and why? that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Learn therefore, my Brethren, to

lose sight of the messenger to look to him that sends him.—We are indeed earthen vessels, weak, and sinful, and vile. If you depend on us, you depend upon a broken reed; so far from being able of ourselves to support you, we want the continual help and support of your prayers. I am persuaded that the success of our ministry depends upon the prayers of our people, and many a time when the minister's hands hang down and he is distressed almost beyond measure, he is lifted up and strengthened by the prayers of his people. My Brethren, be assured it is not outward trials that can weigh down the minister of the gospel, it is what he finds within, a sense of his own unfaithfulness, the contemplation of his work, pity for careless sinners, watching beside the dying, finding some growing cold and lukewarm, and some apparently going back to the world who seemed

to set out well and who did run well,—and many shutting their ears against the truth: these trials do oppress and weigh us down ; and we are driven to the enquiry, “ who is sufficient for these things ? ” and here is our answer,—“ our sufficiency is of God.” He takes us as poor vile empty vessels, that he may fill us out of his own sufficiency, out of his own fulness ; and this he will never cease to do in answer to prayer—to your prayers. Let us therefore learn to depend on God, to look to him and give him the glory for every spiritual blessing we receive.

And let us take another view of the subject ; is it not an unspeakable mercy that God has employed the services of man, as it gives us the opportunity of serving and glorifying him ? It might have been so that God would have disdained our service as beneath his

notice, even though we had tried to serve him with all our might;—if we look at our best services and compare them with what the angels render him continually, we must feel that they are poor and despicable indeed. But, blessed be God, he does not despise them; nay, he loves them; he delights with a supreme delight in the services of his redeemed people. That blessed company of cherubim and seraphim, that surround his throne, know no higher joy than to be engaged in his service:—but we see them all passed by;—“Who will go for us?” the poor prophet shall go; this honour shall be given to him; he, that a few moments before, had been lying upon his face, almost in despair; trembling, groaning, crying out, “woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” Now that he is touched by the altar coal, he is preferred above the angels. See,

my beloved brethren, and admire the grace of the gospel, which can raise our fallen and ruined race higher than the angels in glory. And observe from this, the honour and blessedness of serving God.

Inspired by the angel's hallowed touch, the prophet exclaimed, "Here am I, send me,"—and the Lord said, "go."

This is his Mission ; we have yet to consider :—

II. His Message.

And oh it was a sad, an awful message ! "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

This awful and mysterious commission must be reserved as the subject of our

next discourse,—but I bring it before you now and direct your attention to it, that it may be laid upon your thoughts and upon your heart through the week. I would affectionately invite you to reflect upon it, and to pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the divine truth which it contains may be opened to us, and that we may receive it.

And now let me add a word, by way of application of the subject brought before us to day. We have seen that all who are touched by the live coal taken from off the altar, all who are brought by the Holy Ghost to find pardon and peace at the foot of the cross, receive at the same time a holy fire which fills them with a burning zeal to live to God, a holy impatience to be employed in his service. It leads them to enquire, with converted Saul, “Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” or to say with Isaiah, “Here am I, send me.”

Now the question is, do we feel this desire? is this holy flame kindled in our breasts? is it our supreme concern to live to God? And above all, do we serve him from love? that is the only service he delights in; the only service he accepts. Does the love of Christ constrain us? are our hearts affected by his love to us? so that we say, 'O Lord, thou hast saved me, thou hast died for me, thou hast loved me and washed me from my sins in thine own blood, and purchased heaven for me at such a precious price; what can I now do for thee? how can I testify my love to thee? what wilt thou have me to do?'

This is the language of the child of God; this is the mark of a true convert: he may sometimes doubt what is his will, but when that doubt is resolved, there is no question whether to do it or not.

Brethren, let us bring our religion to this test; let us deal honestly with ourselves: is our religion a mere name, or is it a reality?—a powerful, active, and fruit-producing principle? “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this,—To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

SERMON IV.

THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE.

ISAIAH VI. 9—12.

“And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? and he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”

WE have considered the prophet's preparation for his work,—and nothing could have been more calculated to arm him with a mind fitted for an arduous and

trying enterprise, than the ordeal through which he had been called to pass. The bright effulgence of the Divine glory which had fallen upon his awe-struck mind;—the consciousness that it had awakened within him of his own impurity and his own nothingness;—the glorious display of that sovereign grace which raised him from his low estate to receive the manifest tokens of infinite love,—could not fail to inspire him with entire self-renunciation and unreserved devotedness to God. Cleansed and inflamed by the consecrating touch of the altar coal, he expressed his readiness to execute the divine commission;—and it now remains for us to consider, what that commission was.—And may the Lord the Holy Spirit, who is the revealer of God's truth, unfold to us the meaning of it, and teach us its application to our own souls.

“Go and tell this people, hear ye, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not.”

Oh, it was a sad, an awful commission! To have been sent to proclaim glad tidings would have been a joyful work to the holy prophet:—truly, it is a sweet, a blessed work to convert a soul,—to save a soul. But this was the prophet’s errand, Go,—not to *convert* them, not to save them;—but, “go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” What a fearful errand! enough to make both the ears of him that heard it to tingle; and how peculiarly distressing to the prophet’s softened and willing mind. It was indeed a severe test of his obedience; but he that had wrought in him *to will* did

also work in him *to do* of his good pleasure. He did not utter a hesitating word; nor does he appear to have entertained a repining thought.

Israel had long been rejecting God and slighting his counsels; they had hardened themselves against him, while he had been visiting them with messages of grace and invitations of mercy, sending prophet after prophet with tidings of his good-will towards them: and now he will visit them with his fierce judgments; they had forsaken him and despised his mercy, now he will forsake them and give them up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. This was the design of the prophet's commission:—and he was not rebellious—he breathed not a single murmur:—with a wounded, but obedient heart, he said, “Lord, how long? how long must I be engaged in this sad work? how long shall my brethren, thine own

people Israel, be under this dreadful, this awful judgment?" And the Lord answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

Terrible and fearful as this judgment is, we see its full and literal accomplishment in the Jews. It was pronounced against them more than seven hundred years before the Messiah appeared; and when he came, he found them hardened and bound down under its dreadful influence, just as the ground is hardened and bound by the long wintry frosts.

This passage is quoted or referred to no less than six times in the New Testament, and in each it is used to show how awfully it was fulfilled in the state of the Jews.

Reference is made to it in Matthew xiii. 14. ; Mark iv. 12. ; Luke viii. 10. We have already had occasion to refer to the quotation from this chapter in the 12th of John ; but it is so remarkable and so important, that our attention must again be directed to it.—In verse 37, it is said, “but though hs had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not him.” And then, verse 39, “they could not believe, because that Esaias saith again, he hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” And at the very close of the gospel history, we find them still under the same awful sentence. In the last chapter of the Acts, and at the close of the chapter, we find St. Paul quoting this prophecy to the Jews, when he saw their obstinate resistance of the

truth and the hardness of their hearts: he said, “well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing he shall see and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

In comparing the quotation in the Acts with the words of our text, we must not fail to notice a most remarkable and important lesson to be derived from it. Who was it that sent Isaiah to speak these words? was it not the LORD, Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts? But when St. Paul quotes it, he makes it the language of the Holy Ghost. “Well

spake the Holy Ghost." Does not this show us that the Holy Ghost is Jehovah, the eternal God ?

Thus in this short chapter, we have three distinct and unanswerable proofs of the Trinity of persons in the eternal Godhead ; that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. May this allusion, by God's mercy, build us up more firmly upon this rock of our salvation, the foundation of all our hopes.

Now by the view that we have taken of the state of the Jews in our blessed Saviour's time, and in the time of the apostle Paul, we are convinced that it was an awful demonstration of the unfailing truth of God's word ; that not one jot or tittle shall pass away till all be fulfilled. We there behold the fearful accomplishment of the prophet's commission.

But do we not perceive that it is being fulfilled in the Jews to this very day? Cut off from all their former privileges, afar from their beloved home, scattered all over the world, and afflicted, ridiculed, despised wherever they go;— how is it that they do not understand? When they read the prophets, from day to day, how is it that they do not see that our Jesus is the true Messiah? why do they not perceive that the fiery judgments of God are falling upon them for despising and crucifying his beloved Son? that their forefathers' impious prayer, “His blood be on us and on our children,” is bringing upon them all their present misery? Do we say, Why is it? how is it that they do not understand? The answer is, God has given them up to judicial blindness; there is a thick veil of darkness over their minds when Moses and the Prophets are being read; so that, they hear indeed,

but they understand not; they see indeed, but they perceive not.—Thus blind and hardened and impenitent, they are most afflicted in this world, and hopeless for all eternity.

And truly their cities are laid waste; their land is desolate; and the men are removed far away from it, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Every word of this judgment has been accomplished to the letter.

The Jews were forced out of their land. The emperor Adrian would not allow a Jew to enter Jerusalem, upon pain of death: and he forbad them even to look at it from a distance. And so dreadful was their persecution and distress there, that they were willing to quit the land of their forefathers, to take shelter in heathen lands, where they were still exposed to cruel deaths and every kind of insult and injustice.

To show how their cities are wasted and brought to desolation, I shall give you the testimony of several travellers, who have visited the land of Judea. Their accounts of the different cities which they saw there, are collected together by Dr. Keith, and are fully to be depended upon as correct.

One of the travellers who visited Mount Tabor, says, 'From Mount Tabor is beheld an immensity of plains, scattered over with hamlets, fortresses, and heaps of ruins. Of the once famous cities, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Gadara, Tarichea, and Chorazin, nothing remains but shapeless ruins.— Some vestiges of Emmaus may still be seen. Cava is a very paltry village. The ruins of Tekoa present only the foundations of some considerable buildings. The city of Nain is now a hamlet. The ruins of Sapphura prove the previous existence of a large city. The ancient Lydda and

Diospolis appear like a place lately ravaged by fire and sword, and are one continued heap of rubbish and ruins. The ancient Arimathea is almost in a ruinous state, nothing but rubbish is to be found within its borders. Cæsarea can no longer excite the envy of a conqueror, and has long been abandoned to silent desolation. The city of Tiberias is almost forsaken; and as to the towns that bordered on its lake, no traces of them are left. Zabulon, once the rival of Tyre and Sidon, is a heap of ruins. A few shapeless stones, unworthy of notice, mark the situation of Saffre. The ruins of Jericho, covering no less than a square mile, are surrounded with complete desolation. Bethel is not to be found.'

These are the ancient glorious cities and towns of that once favoured land:— and this the state of them now, according to the statement of those who have visited

the places, and have been eye witnesses of what they describe to us—and this is not the testimony of *one* but of *many*.

I might add the testimony of others, and of other cities; but enough has been said to show the exactness, the fearful exactness with which the denunciation in our text has been accomplished:—"make their heart fat, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

We see the cities wasted and the land devoted to utter desolation,—but worse than all, we see the Jews still given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart.

This was the work to which the prophet was called—"make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." But how was he to execute this dreadful commission? how

must he enter upon this extraordinary work? should he poison their minds with false and corrupting doctrine? or lull them to sleep by filling their minds with lying vanities? No, but he must go and set before them the most solemn truths, and *thus he must harden them.* Go, saith the Lord, “go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not. And so, make their heart fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.”

Truly we should have thought such a message most likely to rouse and awaken them: if any thing could move them it would be such an appeal as this from the lips of God’s prophet, “hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not:”—surely when Israel receives this alarming message from their gracious God, from their best friend, from their merciful benefactor,

surely they will return to the Lord without delay ; they will seek for mercy with mourning and fasting ; like Neneveh, they will turn to their offended God with weeping and humiliation ; surely when the people hear these words, they will all repent sitting in sackcloth and ashes :— but no,—it shall have the opposite effect, it shall *blind*, it shall *darken*, it shall *harden* them.

This discloses to us this solemn truth, which I desire to make the application of our subject in a few words. And oh, my beloved brethren, when I speak, it is with my heart deeply impressed and almost over-whelmed with the awful reality ; and with my earnest prayer to God for you that he may apply it to very many (and oh I would to God, it were to every soul,) here present !

The truth is this ; that the faithful preaching of God's word can never be

in vain ; wherever the word does not soften and quicken, it hardens and kills :— and the more faithful and spiritual the ministry is, the more deadly are its effects upon those who neglect and despise it. So excellent a preacher as Isaiah was, and so well reputed among his people, yet he was sent to preach them *blind*, and *deaf*, and *dead*. Isaiah the evangelical prophet hardened them most, because he spoke most of Christ. But Christ's preaching hardened them more than all ; as the hotter the sun, the more the clay is hardened.

“ We are unto God (saith St. Paul) a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish ;— to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other of life unto life.”

Let me say then, take heed how ye hear. Many little consider what a solemn concernment it will be, how *they* hear. Some come to church from custom, they

conform to the usages of professing christians, and by the force of habit it has become almost necessary to their comfort. But they care not how they hear ; the word takes no effect upon them ; they seem to go away from the sanctuary the same as they came : but it is not really so ;—if they have not been convinced and blessed, they go away further from God, more hardened in unbelief, and more fast bound in Satan's chains.—They think it a good thing that they do not *feel the word*, that they are not troubled by it :—Well, as they love this, they shall have enough of it : those sermons which ought to make them *feel*, shall make them *more unfeeling*,—till at length they become stupified and sermon-proof. Some come to church because they find it wiles away part of the Sunday, and they feel more comfortable when they attend church ;— but take no

pains to hear at all. Others come from curiosity ; they hear the word to pass their opinion upon it ; and go away to make a few flippant remarks upon *what* they have heard, and that is all ; without once enquiring how they have heard. Some hear to make jest of the discourse ; who go home to ridicule the preacher's weak expression and ineffective manner. And if there are such before me to day, I would say to you my friends, perhaps while you are jesting upon the infirmities of the preacher, he may be at the same time upon his knees, in sighs and groans, lamenting the same before God in secret ; ashamed and distressed that so good a cause should have suffered through his ignorance and unfaithfulness, and still praying for such as you that you may not be injured thereby.

But oh let me affectionately remind you, that it has pleased God, by the *foolishness*

of preaching, to save them that believe. And those very sermons which you refuse to hear, prove to God's elect people, the savour of life unto life.—Out of the very rubbish of my weakness and foolishness, the Holy Ghost takes the precious gem of divine truth and gives it to them, so that they go home rejoicing as those who have found great spoil. Blessed be God, there are many dear hearts that bear me witness herein. Or to use another figure, I say, the blessed Comforter purges away the scum and dross of carnal wisdom, and applies the word like a precious salve to many a wounded spirit, to many a troubled conscience.

And why this difference ? I would refer you to the place where our text is quoted for the sixth and last time in the New Testament. You will find it in Romans, xi. 7, 8. “What then ? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for : but

the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded, according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day."

O beware then, lest this awful judgment should come upon you.—Beware, I beseech you, of being hardened by the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, by the gracious tidings of a preached gospel.

Brethren, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;—my message from God to your soul this day is, Flee from the wrath to come. Haste to the cross of Christ; there is the only refuge for the sinner's soul:—he died to save you from the wrath of God: go to him therefore, go to him *now*; this day; this hour, while yet you are touched by this solemn voice; delay not a moment, before God withdraws his Spirit and you

are hardened in sin.—Go to the fountain opened, and there wash and be clean. And if to day you are moved and convinced by the word, while before you were unmoved and unblessed by it, thank God that he did not give you up to hardness of heart; that he did not say of you, “He is joined to idols, *let him alone* ;” but that his Spirit is still striving with you; that his heart is open to receive you—and his arms to embrace you.—“Then seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

SERMON V.

MERCY REJOICING AGAINST JUDGMENT.

ISAIAH VI. 13.

“But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

IN the midst of judgment God will remember mercy: he calls judgment his *strange work*,—but mercy is *his delight*—and never should we feel his judgments unless we drove him to send them for our sins and impenitence: Yet, even then, mercy rejoiceth against judgment: some gracious words shall accompany the

dreadful message which we considered last Sunday. In the midst of the desolation a remnant shall be saved. May it please the Lord the Spirit of truth, to guide us into all truth, and enable us profitably to meditate upon this subject.—May God, for Christ's sake, give us the Holy Spirit.

We must consider this prophecy.

I. As referring to the land of Judea.

Last time we saw the great misery and ruin of that land. “The cities shall be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land shall be utterly desolate.” “Yet, (saith the Lord)—yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

The present desolate state of Judea does not arise from the poverty of the soil or any natural deficiency; there is every thing

to invite and encourage the labours of the husbandman: and all his pains would be richly rewarded. But so it is, the land lies wholly waste and unproductive, because the God of Heaven has blown upon it; he has visited it with his dreadful scourge — according to the word of his mouth the inhabitants are removed, the vinedresser has forsaken the vineyard, and the labours of the husbandman cease — and so instead of being cultivated as a garden, it is left like a wilderness; all its beauty, all that adorned and enriched that once favoured land, has withered and fallen; and is swept away like the faded leaves before the autumnal breezes:— and stripped of its ancient splendour, it is left as an oak whose leaf fadeth: but its inherent resources of fertility are not dried up; the natural richness of the soil is not blighted; the substance is in it, strong as the substance of the teil tree

or the solid oak, whose life is in them, when they shed their leaves. And as the leafless oak waits throughout the winter for the genial warmth of returning spring, to be clothed with renewed foliage, so the once glorious land of Judea is yet full of its natural strength and ready to put forth its former power, whenever the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon it with healing in his wings.

The infidel Volney, though he impiously denies the truth of the Bible, confirms its testimony by what he writes.—As a traveller through the Holy Land, he says, ‘The land in the plains is fat and loamy, and exhibits every sign of the greatest fecundity. Were nature assisted by art, the fruits of the most distant countries might all be grown within its borders.’—And another declares, that, ‘it would be a Paradise, if it were inhabited by industrious people under a good government.’

Thus their testimony confirms the word of God concerning that once favoured land ; the land promised to Abraham ; the land where Jacob wrestled with God by prayer and prevailed ; the land where David lived, and reigned, and prayed, and wrote his Psalms ; the land where Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Josiah reigned ; the land where all the holy prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; the land where the Bible was written ; but above all, the land where our Saviour was born, and passed his life of sorrow,— where he went about doing good, and died to redeem his people. It is of that land we are speaking, and surely any thing relating to that sacred place must be interesting to every child of God.— And we may well rejoice to see that although it is now wasted and utterly desolate, yet (according to God's unfailing promise) its natural strength is unabated

and its substance is in it: it wants but the blessing of Israel's God; and when he returns to visit his people with his favour and love, it will again become a land flowing with milk and honey,—the glory of all lands. But

II. We must consider this prophecy as relating not only to the land, but to the people inhabiting it,—God's ancient people Israel.

“ Yet in it there shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

Now if this passage appear difficult to be understood, we must observe that it is figurative, and endeavour to search out the nature of the figure employed; and we shall find that it is a clear manifestation of God's purpose concerning

his people Israel — in which, two predictions are comprised concerning them :

1. Their continual preservation.
2. Their future restoration.

“ Yet in it there shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten : as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves ; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

Which was to show that although the overflowing scourge should come upon them and make them very desolate, yet a remnant should be spared : although they should indeed be left few in number, and brought very low, yet it would be with them as with the sturdy oak in winter, which though leafless is not lifeless, but contains all the germs of future greatness and future glory. And is it not even so with the Jews ? Their beauty has indeed withered, their ancient glory

is departed, yet their strength is in them still: like the ancient oak they have weathered all the storms of persecution to which they have been exposed for nearly 1800 years.—Every cruelty that man could invent has been used towards them; the malice and power of mighty princes have been combined to oppress and crush them. In various nations in all ages it has been looked upon as meritorious to oppress a Jew, to kill a Jew. Thousands of that afflicted people have been slain by their own hands, and the hands of their dearest friends, driven to desperation by the inhuman cruelty of their oppressors, and yet they still remain a people:—few in number indeed they are, compared with what they were, but you cannot name the kingdom, from one end of the world to the other, where you will not find a Jew.—Thus the remnant remains; a small remnant; an

oppressed and pitiable remnant ; their beauty faded ; their glory departed ; yet like the forest oak they stand and their strength is in them, though their leaves are fallen.—“ Fear thou not, saith the Lord, (Jeremiah xlvi. 28.) for I am with thee ; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee.”—The Egyptians, the Grecians, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, the Romans, where are they ? look the world over, and where will you find a vestige of those once mighty and glorious nations ? God *has made* a full end of them, but he *has not made* a full end of the Jews, and he *never will*.

But they not only remain, but wonderful to say, they remain a peculiar and distinct people.—Though scattered among all people, they have not mixed with any ; but are every where marked as a different

and strange race. This is a fulfilment of that ancient prophecy of Balaam's, which you will find in Numbers, xxiii. 9. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." This prophecy was delivered 3397 years ago. And who does not see how exactly it is fulfilled? Many of my brethren have heard of the Jews who for some time resided in this parish; Did they not dwell alone? Were they not looked upon as a distinct and peculiar people? This remarkable prediction was confirmed by the prophet Amos, ix. 9. "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Though they were to be scattered throughout the world, as seed is scattered over a field, yet not a single grain should fall upon the earth so as to take root; — in no

country should the Jews be suffered to become naturalized.

I wonder, when I am told of certain mountain streams or currents of water which run through the lakes of another kind of water, and keep their own nature, without mixing at all with the other water through which they flow:—I marvel at such a phenomenon, perhaps some would not allow it to be credible. But here, my Brethren, you behold a greater wonder before your eyes; here you behold the Jewish people, like a river without banks, flowing through all the nations under heaven for 1800 years, and yet it has never deviated from its course, nor broken its appointed line.

But we must proceed to the second prediction contained in our text, concerning this wonderful people.—

2. Their restoration.

That the people are so wonderfully preserved for so many ages and through so

many disasters, is enough to lead us to think that it is for some great and glorious purpose:—and if we turn to our bibles, we soon find what that purpose is.

A very few of the many scriptures upon this subject, will be sufficient to show that the Jews are preserved for future restoration to God's favour, and a day of happiness and prosperity such as they have never yet known:— Duteronomy xxx. 3—5. “Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee

above thy fathers."—Jeremiah xxx. 10, 11. "Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." Jeremiah xxxi. 8—14. "Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications

will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them

rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord."—Verses 27, 28. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." Ezekiel xxxvi. 8—12. "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities

shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men." — Ezekiel xxxvii. 21—28. "And say unto them, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into

two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them,

and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Amos ix. 13—15. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

And now it only remains for us to see how this glorious truth is revealed in our text:—“ Yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten.”

There is evidently an allusion here to the tithes under the Levitical law. It was commanded, Leviticus xxvii. 30. that the tenth of every thing in the land was to be consecrated to God. “ And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s: it is holy unto the Lord.” Now these tithes or the offerings of the tenth of the produce were brought to God, to be eaten by the Priests and Levites in the house of the Lord; and thus every thing that was dedicated to Jehovah, was holy and eaten by the Priests in the Holy Place.

This explains the expression, “ in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten.”

There shall remain of the holy seed a remnant, a tithing; and that tithing shall return and shall be eaten: that is, the remnant shall return to the Lord, and shall be accepted of him, as holy and sacred,—just as the tithes brought to the temple were accepted of God, when they were eaten by the priests. “They shall return and shall be eaten;” God will own them for his people, and he will be their God; they shall all be consecrated to him as a holy nation. This is abundantly confirmed by many passages of scripture. Jeremiah xxxii. 37—41. “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear

me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." And Ezekiel xliii. 7. "And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places."

Thus by searching into other parts of the bible and comparing them with this, we find that in our text there is as much

precious truth as in any other verse of this wonderful chapter. It may appear a little obscure when first we read it,—but when we look at it in connection with what goes before, and compare it with the parallel passages of God's word, we see that it speaks mercy to an elect remnant of that people whom we saw threatened with such awful judgments last Sunday,—of which remnant, St. Paul speaks, Romans xi. 5. “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

It tells us, moreover, that the people should endure for ages, though stripped of all their glory, and still retain their strength, like the leafless oak in the winter, which only waits the sunshine of spring, to put forth its power and be clothed afresh with verdure and beauty.

It tells us, also, that that glorious day shall come ; the Sun of Righteousness

shall rise upon them with healing in his wings;—that they shall again be joined to the Lord— that they shall return to him, and that he will accept them, and he will be their God and they shall be his people.

And now, Brethren, let us look for the practical application of this subject.— What are we to get from it for the good of our poor hungry starving souls? Oh, Brethren, there is much instruction, and much comfort for us all to draw from it.

1. It reminds us of the faithfulness of God, and the unfailing truth of his word.

And can we be too often reminded of this? Who can say, that his faith in God's word is so strong that it needs not any thing to confirm it;—so stedfast that he never staggers at the promises through unbelief? Is not this more the language of every child of God, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief ?”

When Pharoah saw Moses do that which none of his magicians could do, he exclaimed, "This is the finger of God." Now when we trace the fulfilment of Scripture; when we observe how things foretold 3,000 years ago, are now coming to pass, we are constrained to exclaim, "This is the word of God." Who but the eternal God could declare things to come to pass thousands of years after they were spoken? And, Brethren, is it not delightful, is it not consoling to remember, that it was the same faithful and covenant-keeping God who gave us all those exceeding great and precious promises from which we draw all our comfort, and on which we build all our hopes?

2. Again, if these blessings are in store for Israel, ought we not earnestly to desire that they should be partakers of them? We ought certainly for their sakes and our own also.

Oh, who can conceive what their joy will be when the veil shall be taken from their eyes, and they shall know Jesus as their Messiah:—when he shall make himself known to them,—‘I am Jesus, your Brother, whom ye sold and crucified.’ And Oh, think what glory shall redound to our gracious Master, when all the hearts of the Jews shall be turned towards him as the heart of one man.

But if we speak of the blessing it will be to them, we need not lose sight of the unspeakable blessing it would be to us and all the people of God.—How it would confirm our faith to witness the glorious fulfilment of those wondrous prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled to the glory of his people Israel. What new strength, what new life, new vigour, new prospects it will give to all Christians, to all the church of God.—St. Paul tells us that it will be like life from the dead,

Romans xi. 15. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" And again verse 12. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

And as this day is earnestly to be desired, so it is diligently to be sought for by the Lord's people;—whenever this glorious event takes place it will be in answer to prayer.—See Ezekiel xxxvi. 35—37. "And they shall say, this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it and

I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God ; *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.*" And Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. " I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

And now, if I should add another word upon this text, it would be to show how it speaks spiritual comfort and peace to the child of God.

The believer has his seasons of joy and comfort. He has little reason to think himself a christian who has never tasted and felt somewhat of the joy in the Holy Ghost, which the Bible speaks of. These may be looked upon as the believer's summer seasons, his bright and sunny days; and very joyful he is on those

days ; oh, he thinks, oh that it were always thus with me ! in prayer, in communion with his Saviour, he says, ‘ Master, it is good for me to be here, let me abide ; ’—gladly would he tarry there for ever. These are good days to the christian, these are his times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

But, Brethren, the wintry seasons are good also ; the dark and cloudy days are equally needful ; the wintry days and frosty nights are quite as salutary ; aye, and the dark and stormy days too ; when the gloomy winds of affliction and temptation come and blow off our fine leaves of profession, and strip us bare. How needful these trying seasons are, we may learn from St. Peter, i. 6. “ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” You see here, he speaks of the summer season ; but he tells us that

there is a needs be for the cold dark season of temptation too.

Is it so with any of us, my Brethren? Are we brought low by temptation? Do we see ourselves as it were stripped bare, viler than the vilest, poorer than the poorest? Is the devil vexing us with a feeling of our poverty? Does he taunt us with our low condition? Oh, Brethren, then there is comfort for us in our text: for Jesus is Jesus still; he will accept of us in all our misery. And our sense of our misery is a blessed evidence that the holy seed remaineth in us: that although we may be distressed and torn, and like an oak whose leaves are fallen, yet that grace which he has put within us shall never fail. Let us then look to Jesus; let us pray and watch for his return;—for to them that look for him he will appear;—he will shine upon them with his bright beams of light and love— and

soon the day will come when our sun shall no more go down, neither shall our moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be unto us an everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

And now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,—to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.

THE END.

The Author begs to apologize for several Typographical Errors, his limited time before leaving England precluding the possibility of a final correction of the sheets for the press.





